a machine-readable medium containing instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause an internal packet switched data network to perform as a plurality of processing servers each being capable of initiating communication with every one of a plurality of outbound resources and a database server that are part of the internal packet-switched data network, each processing server implements a router-filter and a message queue, the message queue to store request messages that are one of (1) addressed to, and (2) received from, a customer of the message delivery service, over an external packet switched data network, the router-filter to obtain a request message from the queue while polling the queue for pending requests, validate a customer associated with said request message after accessing the account information in the database server, and based on a message type of said request message determining which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, and each of the plurality of outbound resources being capable of converting said request message, once assigned to it by the router-filter, into one of a format capable of being transmitted to a fax machine over a generalized switched telephone network (GSTN), a format capable of being played back to a telephone over the GSTN, and a format capable of being transmitted to a paging terminal over the GSTN or to a paging gateway over the external network packet-switched network, based upon the message type of said request message.

21. (Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, cause the internal network to perform as a private data network.

22. (Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor,

cause the router-filter to prioritize a plurality of request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

23.   (Amended) The article of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, cause the router-filter to determine which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said request message.

24.   (Amended) The article of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, cause the router-filter to generate an error message that indicates an error in delivering said request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said request message was assigned.